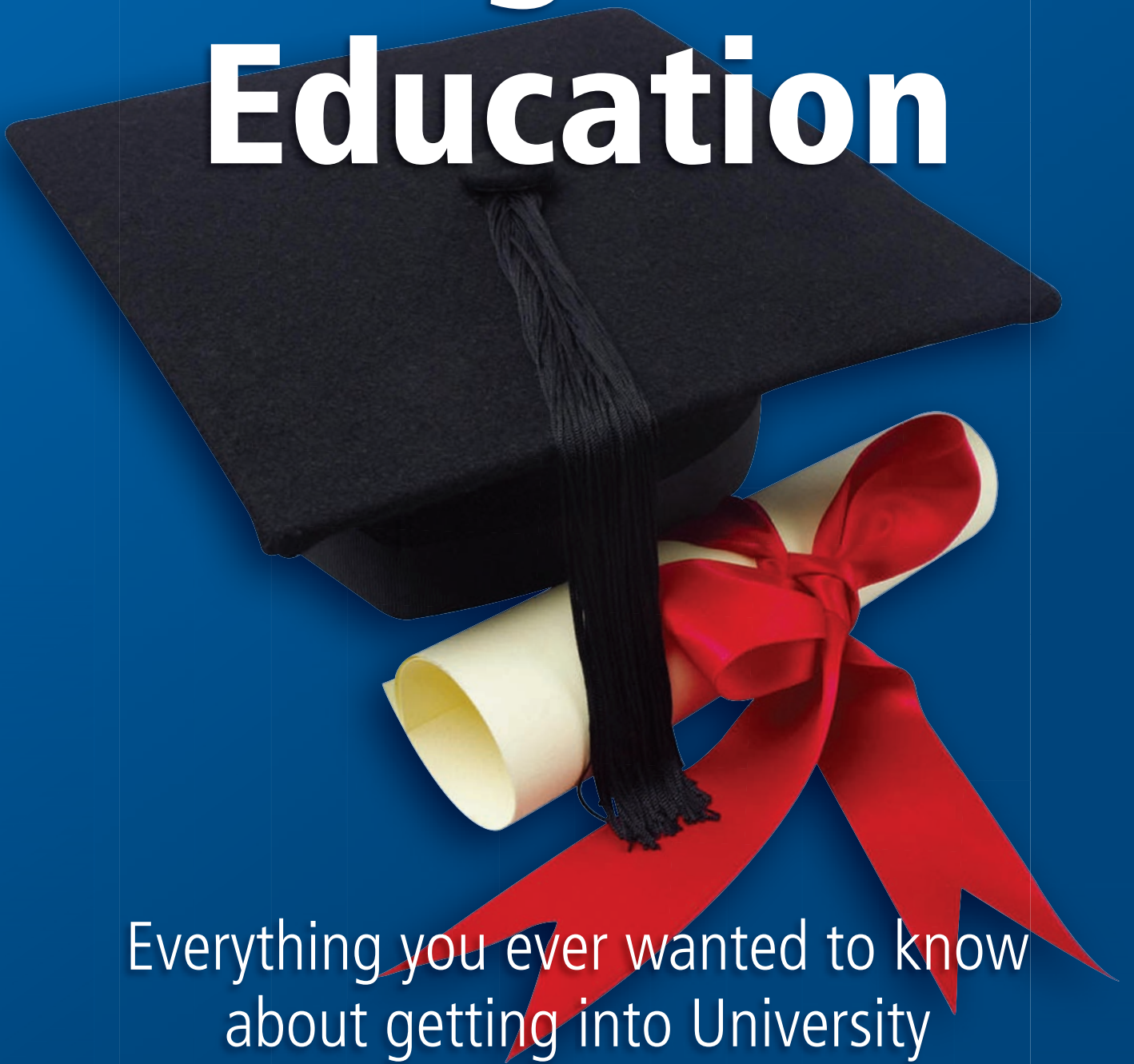


Hockerill Anglo-European College

# Applying to Higher Education



Everything you ever wanted to know  
about getting into University

# Introduction

This booklet has been designed to help you with the whole process of choosing where to study, what to study and how to apply successfully. This decision is perhaps one of the most important decisions you will make and it is vital that you get it right. It is not a decision that is made overnight, it will take many hours of soul searching, not to mention research. This booklet is the first step to guiding you on your long journey.

<b>It is subsequently divided into these key sections</b>	<b>Page</b>
■ Where should I study?	2
■ The financial implications	5
■ What should I study?	7
■ Do I have the right entry requirements?	11
■ The application process	13
■ Writing your Personal Statement	16
■ Sample Personal Statements	19
■ Post-application	23
■ UCAS Timeline	27
■ Glossary	29
■ Useful websites	31

# Where should I study?

For some of you this will be a relatively straightforward decision, whilst others might be considering a number of options, such as studying abroad.

It is certainly worth broadening out your search initially, just so you can be sure you are making an informed decision. Indeed, studying in the U.S.A. is becoming increasingly popular as it can be cheaper than studying here. Universities, including the Ivy League universities, offer attractive bursaries. However, you need to be aware that there is no central system for application as in the UK. In the UK UCAS allows you to apply to up to five universities through one application. In other countries you apply to each university in turn. At the same time, if you decide that you want to study here, don't forget to look at all parts of the U.K. – England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales.

Think about location. Identify your preferences. Do you want to stay close to home? Do you have to live at home because of financial constraints or maybe there are other more personal reasons. Do you want to go to a major town or city, or would you prefer a rural setting? Do you prefer north or south? What about the cost of living in big cities such as London? Do you want a university on one site, or a few different sites? Would you feel lost in a large university and would therefore prefer a smaller institution?

At the same time you need to acquaint yourself with the different types of university. To generalise universities can be broken down into four categories:

**The Ancient Universities** (e.g. Oxbridge, St Andrews, Glasgow, Aberdeen and Edinburgh) founded between the 13th and 16th century.

**The Red Brick Universities** (e.g. Birmingham, Bristol, Leeds, Manchester and Sheffield) founded in the 19th and early 20th century.

**The Plate Glass Universities** (e.g. York, Kent, and Lancaster). Founded in the 1960s.

**The New Universities** (e.g. Greenwich, Kingston, Hertfordshire and Oxford Brookes) were often former Polytechnics which has university status conferred upon them in the 1990s.

Different places suit different people, so it depends on what you're looking for. A legitimate concern when moving into Higher Education is the quality of the course or the institution. The question of quality is difficult to answer objectively, because all students have individual needs and preferences. The aspects, which are important to one person, might be less important to another person. However, you might wish to consult the **Quality Assurance Agency ([www.qaa.ac.uk](http://www.qaa.ac.uk))** which carries out and publishes external reviews of all universities. In addition, the **Unistats** website ([www.unistats.com](http://www.unistats.com)) contains statistics and reports about students' views on the quality of teaching.

A word of caution - quality assessments are important and can be useful in making your decision, but do adopt an open mind. There is no substitute for doing your own research, reading through prospectuses and books and ideally visiting the institution on an Open Day and talking to staff and current students. Numerous guides and league tables offer help, but check the source as it may be biased. Some universities, for example, post league tables on their websites which show their courses at

number one. For information and reasonably impartial advice check **The Times Online** ([www.timesonline.co.uk](http://www.timesonline.co.uk)) or **The Complete University Guide** ([www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk](http://www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk)), an interactive site where you can highlight your requirements and create your own unique table.

The following are some publications which might prove useful. They can be found in the Connexions office.

- Directory of University and College entry - DUCE
- The Virgin Alternative guide to British Universities
- The Ultimate University Ranking Guide.
- The Student Book - Trotman
- Choosing Degree Courses by Brian Heap.

### **Questions to pose when choosing a university or college**

As you go through the process you will think of many questions. Here are some that you might want to consider.

- Are other students from your country studying in the same place?
- What clubs does the university or college have? What sports facilities do they have?
- What type of accommodation is available?
- Does the university or college offer support for people with disabilities?

### **Students with disabilities**

If you have a disability or specific learning difficulty, you are strongly encouraged to make early direct contact with individual institutions before submitting your application.

Under the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA), universities and colleges must not discriminate against disabled students in areas such as admissions and the provision of student services. The DDA requires them to make 'reasonable adjustments' to their services so that disabled students are not placed at a 'substantial disadvantage'. In addition, all higher education institutions should now have a Disability Equality Scheme, setting out how they intend to improve disability equality across their institution.

Most universities and colleges have disability coordinators or advisers. You can look up their contact details on the **Skill: National Bureau for Students with Disabilities website at [www.skill.org.uk](http://www.skill.org.uk)**. The disability coordinator can tell you what support is available and help set up an information visit. This is an opportunity to talk to staff about any adaptations that may be needed. You might also want to talk to the head of department or other academic staff for specific course information.

If you visit a college or university, it might be helpful to take with you a checklist of questions to ask members of staff and students. What you ask will obviously depend upon the nature of your disability, but the following are examples of questions you might include.

- Are all the buildings I need to use physically accessible?



- Are there any particular facilities for disabled students?
- Are there any current students with a similar impairment?
- What support do they receive?
- Who will help organise my support?
- Can you help me apply for additional funding if needed?
- Are the methods of teaching and assessment appropriate to my needs?
- What would happen if I started the course and experienced a problem?

Telling the institution about your disability in advance can also help them to prepare and arrange support in time for the start of your course. If you are unsure what to tell your potential universities and colleges, you may find it helpful to read the Disclosing your disability booklet on the Skill: National Bureau for Students with Disabilities website ([www.skill.org.uk](http://www.skill.org.uk)).

# The financial implications

Going to university or college is one of the biggest investments you can make. But do you know how much it is going to cost you and what help is available?

## **The cost of studying in the UK**

As a student, you will usually have to pay for two things: tuition fees for your course and living costs, such as rent, food, books, transport and entertainment. Fees charged vary between courses, as well as between universities and colleges and will require individual research.

However, there is help available. The purpose of student loans from the government is to help cover the costs of your tuition fees, and basic living costs (rent, bills, food etc). Two types are available: tuition fee loans, and maintenance loans. Many other kinds of loan are available to students studying at university or college and the interest rate can vary considerably. However, the interest rate on a government student loan only takes inflation into account, so the overall amount will, in real terms, be the same as the amount borrowed.

Both types of student loan are available to all students who meet the basic eligibility requirements. Find out more information from the relevant site below.

England: **Student Finance England**

Wales: **Student Finance Wales**

Scotland: **Student Awards Agency for Scotland**

Northern Ireland: **Student Finance Northern Ireland**

## **Student finance calculator**

The Student Loans Company has created a new student finance calculator that lets you work out how much financial support you could receive. You can create and compare estimates for up to five different universities and courses. Look this up [www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk) The information that this website provides is incredibly useful.

## **International and EU students**

If you are planning to study in the United Kingdom and want to attend a publicly funded university or college, your fee status (whether you pay full-cost fees or a subsidised fee rate) will be determined by the UK institution you plan to attend.

## **Other help available**

As well as student loans, other help is available, such as grants and financial awards. These vary depending on your chosen university or college and your personal circumstances. For more information about any of the support available, go to [www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk), or you can contact student services at your chosen university or college.

There is also help for **students with disabilities**. The university or college will not always necessarily pay for all your specialist needs. Instead, you may be able to get funding through Disabled Students' Allowances. DSAs are designed to help with the costs that you incur, in attending your course, as a direct result of your disability or specific learning difficulty. They are available to full-time and part-time students with disabilities, although part-time students with disabilities must be studying at least 50% of a full-time course.

How much you get does not depend on your income or that of your household. Unlike student loans, this assistance does not have to be repaid.

Depending on your needs, extra support from the DSA could include:

- specialist equipment, for example computer software, digital recorders, CCTV
- a non-medical helper, such as a note-taker, specialist tutor or sign-language interpreter
- extra travel costs you have to pay because of your disability
- other costs, for example extra photocopying costs, Braille paper, ink cartridges.

It is important that you let your awarding authority, e.g. Student Finance England, Local Authority (LEA) in Wales, Student Awards Agency for Scotland (SAAS) or Local Education and Library Board (ELB) in Northern Ireland know straight away if you have a disability and think you will need extra help or equipment on your course. In England you can request an application form for DSAs at the same time as making your online UCAS application.

## DSA forms

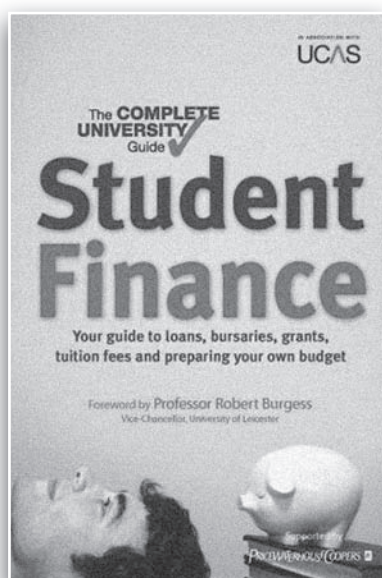
DSA forms are available to download from the sites listed below.

England: **Student Finance England**

Wales: **Student Finance Wales**

Scotland: **Student Awards Agency for Scotland**

Northern Ireland: **Student Finance Northern Ireland**



## Managing your money

Learning to manage your money at university or college requires planning. You'll need to learn to budget and live within your means - this way you'll find it much easier to support yourself without leaving with a huge debt. Read through the **Managing money section** on the UCAS website for tips and advice, and use the budget calculator to help you plan your finances.

## Student Finance

Your guide to loans, bursaries, grants, tuition fees and preparing your own budget. Find out exactly how much university will cost you and how you can fund your studies. Understand how tuition fees differ within England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Get a realistic picture of all your likely outgoings - accommodation, food, travel, study costs, insurance and socialising - and work out a budget you can keep to.

# What should I study?

Choosing your course is not as easy as you initially might think and the more research you do, the more secure you will be that you are making the right choices.

You need to be mindful of the wider variety of courses available. You will have the opportunity to attend a University Conventions Day but you are also advised to use the university websites for an online prospectus and to look at the students' alternative prospectus. They also offer virtual reality tours but it is also advisable to visit the university on Open Days. Don't forget to contact the Admissions Office, if you have a query, they are human beings and not just academics on a pedestal! All of this takes time ... and effort!

## **Connexions Interview**

If you require further guidance it might be worth arranging a Connexions interview through Mr Hopkins to discuss future options.

However, this might not be necessary and you might be ready to start the process on your own. Remember, all students who apply to university in the UK have to go through UCAS. This is a centralised system and the application process is completed on line. At the same time, the UCAS website [www.ucas.ac.uk](http://www.ucas.ac.uk) is not just for your applications, it is also an invaluable resource.

## **Take the Stamford Test**

Another good place to start is to log onto [www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com) where you will find a link to the 'Stamford Test'. This is a free service; it asks you to answer 'yes', 'no' or 'possibly' to a short series of questions. It will then give you a pointer to subjects that might be worth looking into.

After you have checked your Stamford results, you may also find Centigrade Online helpful. Centigrade goes into much more detail, matching your interests, subjects and qualifications to direct you to up to eight course areas. Once you have answered the questionnaire, COA can email the report to you, or post you a detailed bound report with well matched selections. However, Centigrade currently costs £15 for the report to be emailed and £20 for it to be posted.

## **Entry Profiles**

Entry Profiles are designed to help you decide which universities or colleges and which courses to apply to. They can also be accessed on the UCAS website. They provide details about courses, the university or college offering each course, entry qualifications, selection criteria and the admissions policy. They are compiled by staff at the university or college, who understand what you need to know about their courses, and what kind of personal qualities, interests and experiences it will be helpful for you to have, so you can be successful on the course you choose. Please note that many courses with the same title are actually very different in terms of content and study methods, so Entry Profiles will also help you sort out which will suit you best.

## How to use Entry Profiles

1. First, read the information about the course. Ask yourself if it will cover subjects that interest you and what career opportunities would be open to you. Does the Entry Profile tell you about the personal qualities the university or college is looking for in its students, or the experience that would be beneficial? See if it sounds like you.
2. Check the academic entry requirements. Are you studying the right subjects to be accepted onto this course? Will you meet the grades or Tariff points required?
3. Make sure that you know where the course will be taught - sometimes it is not at the main campus. Check that you could travel to lectures and tutorials easily, if you live some distance away.
4. Some courses require you to take an admissions test. If this is the case, you need to find out how to apply for it.

## Admissions Tests

Some universities and colleges require you to pass an admissions test as well as standard qualifications if you are applying for courses in certain subjects. The details for some of these tests are provided below. However, there may be more and you need to check this on the Entry Profile.

### **BioMedical Admissions Test (BMAT)**

For entry to Medicine and Veterinary schools.

### **English Literature Admissions Test (ELAT)**

For entry to English courses at the University of Oxford.

### **Graduate Medical School Admissions Test (GAMSAT)**

For entry into Medicine.

### **History Aptitude Test (HAT)**

For entry to Modern History and joint honours degrees involving Modern History at the University of Oxford.

### **Health Professions Admissions Test (HPAT)**

For entry to certain medical courses at the University of Ulster.

### **The National Admissions Test for Law (LNAT)**

For entry to Law.

### **Modern and Medieval Languages Test (MML)**

For entry to Modern and Medieval Languages at the University of Cambridge.

### **Sixth Term Examination Papers (STEP)**

For entry to Mathematics at the University of Cambridge.

### **Thinking Skills Assessment (TSA Cambridge)**

For entry to Computer Science, Natural Sciences, Engineering and Economics at the University of Cambridge.

### **Thinking Skills Assessment (TSA Oxford), formerly known as the PPE Admissions Test**

For entry to the Philosophy, Politics and Economics, and the Economics and Management courses at the University of Oxford.

### **Thinking Skills Assessment (TSA) UCL**

For entry to European Social and Political Studies at University College London (UCL).

### **UK Clinical Aptitude Test (UKCAT)**

For entry to medical and dental schools.

### **IELTS**

In addition, if you do not have a qualification of any sort in the English language, then you should be prepared to sit an International English Language Test (IELTS) examination, which you will need to declare. This certifies your ability to function in English at university. If this applies to you then you need to contact Mrs Baradeau, who, as a teacher of English as a second language, will make the appropriate arrangements. Further information can be found on the website [www.ielts.org](http://www.ielts.org)

### **Types of courses**

**HONOURS:** All final awards at degree level are graded: – A first (1st) class honours, an upper second (2.1), a lower second (2.2) and a third (3rd).

**SINGLE HONOURS:** where one subject is studied.

**JOINT HONOURS:** where two subjects are studied either both subjects equally or one as a minor and one as a major.

**COMBINED HONOURS:** where there is even more flexibility in the chosen course (e.g. up to four courses in the first year and then two in the second).

**SANDWICH:** these are courses which have a built-in placement in industry as part of the course. Often available in Business, Engineering and Computing.

**FOUNDATION DEGREE:** Introduced in 2001 in a range of work related areas, these courses are meant to meet the needs of industry and commerce. They are not studied to honours level, although good progress would enable a transfer to this level. They normally take two to three years to complete.

**DIPLOMA IN HIGHER EDUCATION (Dip HE):** This can be a qualification in its own right awarded for completing two years of study. Subject areas include Visual Studies, Art and Design and Popular Music. Again access to degree level is possible.

**YEAR ABROAD:** there are an increasing number of courses which now offer time abroad to study or work. Aside from Languages where it may be compulsory, it may apply to American Studies, Business, Engineering, Geography and Law.

**BA/BSc:** they denote Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Sciences respectively.

**MA / MSc:** many Scottish Universities go straight for Masters

### **Questions to pose when choosing a course**

#### ■ **Do you want to take a traditional or a vocational course?**

Do you want to study a traditional single subject such as Chemistry or a joint course such as International Law and French, a foundation course where you can study more than one subject or a more vocational course such as Teaching/Education?

■ **Do you want a three year course or a four year course?**

In other words, do you want to consider applying for a four year masters course, rather than a three year first degree? The advantage might be financial because you will get funding for the four years. If you opt for a three year first degree, then a masters course you will be expected to finance your second degree. At the same time, you need to be sure that this is what you want. It may not be appropriate if you want to keep your options open. Once you start/commit to a 4 year course can you decide to stop after 3?

■ **Do you want a year abroad?**

Many universities offer time abroad, not just for languages so it is worth exploring what opportunities there might be.

■ **Do you want to defer entry?**

You may want to take a gap year but secure your university place for your return.

■ **What exactly is the course content?**

Applying for a History course, for example, will require further research into a breakdown of the course.

■ **How will you be assessed?**

Is there any coursework involved? When are the exams?

■ **How much tuition time is there?**

What is the ratio between lectures, seminars and tutorials?

■ **Who will instruct you?**

Check the department for areas of expertise.

■ **What career opportunities will this course lead to?**

Sometimes a degree in itself will be sufficient in itself to open doors but for others you will need to plan ahead.

# Do I have the right entry requirements?

Each university or college has different requirements that their students need to meet before they can start a course. These can be particular exam grades or Tariff points, or be non-academic, like having a health check.

## Minimum entry requirements

Minimum entry requirements are a guide to the level of education required to study on each course. The universities or colleges you apply to will decide if your qualifications meet these requirements when they consider your application. Remember that a university's or college's decision is likely to be based on your overall suitability for the course as well as whether you meet the minimum entry requirements. Most universities will quote their entry requirements as a total number of IB points, but some may ask for UCAS points. These relate to the IB scores shown in the table below:

<b>IBDP Points</b>	<b>Tarif Points</b>	<b>IBDP Points</b>	<b>Tarif Points</b>
45	720	34	479
44	698	33	457
43	676	32	435
42	654	31	413
41	632	30	392
40	611	29	370
39	589	28	348
38	567	27	326
37	545	26	304
36	523	25	282
35	501	24	260

So, ultimately, you need to have an idea of how many points you might realistically achieve in the IB. These will be based on the predicted levels that you receive at the end of Year 12.

As you know, you can make up to **five** choices on your application form and consequently, we suggest that you try to ensure a balance according to your predictions. They should include **one** choice which is **just** (2 points) above your predicted grades, **two or three** choices that are exactly on the tariff score and **one** choice just (2–4 points) below predictions to be certain of a safe reserve.



For instance, if you are predicted 36 points, then you might consider one application at the 38 mark which would set a serious challenge. Three applications should be entered at 36 points and one application should be at 32 – 34 points.

Your academic staff predict grades for each subject. Although you may wish to enter a dialogue with them in terms of how they reached this decision you should respect their professionalism and not challenge the grade.

# The application process

When you have narrowed down your choices, you are ready to start work on your UCAS application form.

According to the website your UCAS application form must arrive at UCAS by January 15th at the latest. However, do not pay too much attention to this date, this is the final date and it is more advisable to apply as soon as possible. The College will set an internal deadline.

You will receive training on the EAS (Electronic Application System) but it is a very user friendly system and most of the form should be completed independently. As long as you can access the internet you will be able to access your form and you can complete it over time. It is, however, essential that you record/remember your password after you have registered.

There are a number of sections for you to complete

- personal details
- education
- additional information
- employment
- choices
- personal statement

For each there is a 'help' section. You only need to click on this to find answers to your questions

## 1. Personal details

- full name
- previous name
- date of birth
- home address
- postal address ( as a boarder, it is important that you give Hockerill as your postal address)
- nationality
- date of birth
- e-mail address

## 2. Additional information

- Parental occupation
- Parental education
- Nomination access – if you wish your details to be accessed by a guardian or parent
- Criminal convictions
- Disabilities

### 3. Choices

You are entitled to five choices. However, if you intend applying to Oxford or Cambridge you can only apply to one, you can not apply to both. In addition, you can only apply for one course as opposed to other universities where you can make multiple applications to the same university for different courses.

Potential medical/veterinary science students are restricted to four schools, the fifth has to be of a more general nature.

Your application is 'blind' in as much as the university does not know of other choices.

### FAQs

#### **Can I put just one choice down?**

Yes, this is possible. Only apply to just one course if it really is the only one you would consider. Mature students sometimes find themselves in this position if they are unable to move away from their hometown or if they are truly passionate about only one course.

#### **Can I put all my choices at just one University?**

In theory yes, but you should only do this if you are restricted to one particular university. Bear in mind that your course choices should be reasonably similar in order for you to write a convincing Personal Statement.

#### **Can I vary my course choices?**

Yes but .....the applicant whose UCAS choices look like this should be OK:

*History*

*History and Politics*

*History*

*Politics with Social Economic History*

The applicant whose choices look like this is obviously completely barking....

*History*

*Astrophysics*

*History*

*Beauty Therapy*

*French*

### 4. Education

You need to declare all your qualifications and the examining board. This includes GCSEs, AS and A2 qualifications.

If you are an international student you also need to declare your national qualifications. There is no need to 'translate' these qualifications into English as Admissions Tutors are well versed in the full range of international qualifications.

Don't forget to include additional qualifications such as Music, Dance, Life saving, Coaching/Refereeing certificates.

### 5. Employment

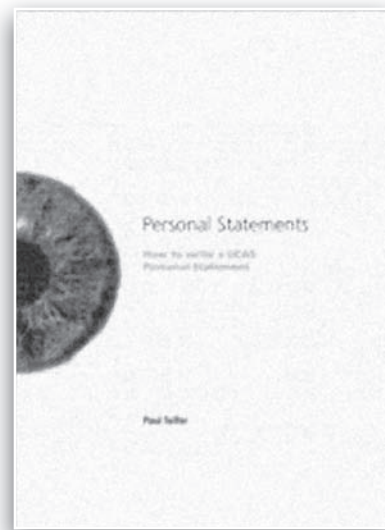
This section requires information on paid employment. Reference to any voluntary work which supports your application should be made in your personal statement. This is particularly important for vocational courses.

## **6. Personal Statement**

UCAS recommend the following publication. You will, however, receive guidance from your tutor, your Wellbeing teacher and of course your referee.

### **Personal Statements**

In an increasingly competitive world, the personal statement gives you a chance to impress. Now in its third edition, this essential book has guided thousands of students towards outstanding, highly individual personal statements - and acceptance by their first choice university. This definitive guide continues to be used by top schools, colleges and careers departments for its ability to give you the knowledge, initiative and skills required to achieve an individual UCAS statement of excellence.



# Writing your Personal Statement

The Personal Statement is arguably one of the most important parts of the whole UCAS form.

Without a good Personal Statement, all those hours of careful research and all that effort can be wasted. It is your opportunity to sell yourself. University Admissions Tutors read thousands. Therefore, the more interesting, captivating and unique yours is, the better the chance of getting yourself noticed. It is often the only information that Admissions Tutors have, to help them make a decision about whether to offer you a place, or whether to interview you, or whether to reject your application.

In essence, your Personal Statement must demonstrate your **passion**. The following offers a tried and tested framework for you to follow.

## **Section 1: Explain why you want to do the course**

- Exactly why you are applying for the course? At the same time, don't mention features that only relate to your first choice – this is not going to impress the other 4!
- What motivates you to want to spend the next 3/4 years studying this subject?
- Explain which particular aspects of your subjects have influenced your choice of course.
- Mention any publications/books/journals you are reading that have fired your interest or any person in your specific field who has inspired you and why?
- Avoid generalisations – try to give evidence which supports your statements
- The opening sentence is the most important one. However, it is better to be original, rather than quote an obscure source.

## **Section 2: Academic skills that support your application**

- Why would you make a good contribution to the course – what have you got to offer?
- Information about your current course – what have you studied and which elements have you particularly enjoyed? How does this link with the course(s) you are applying for?
- Indicate what skills you have learnt from your IB subjects which you feel would be useful in the course you have chosen.
- Information about your coursework, your Extended Essay and TOK as appropriate.

## **Section 3: Practical Work Experience**

- State the skills you gained and match them to the duties you carried out on your work experience.

- Any career plans you might have as a result of this experience (even if they are a bit hazy at the moment) – and how they might link to the course. If you are applying for Teacher Training, for example, give details of your school based work experience as part of your CAS programme – what did you do, what did you learn about teaching, and the education system, etc?

#### **Section 4: Key Skills, such as communication with others and problem solving, as revealed in positions of responsibility**

- State the experiences you have gained within College. For each relevant experience, consider which skills you have developed. Perfect responsibilities (College and House), Library Monitor, Mentor, Interact officer, College Council.
- Identify and outline the key activities or experiences which you have gained in a non-educational environment and that highlight your teamwork, organizational ability, dedication, etc.

#### **Section 5: Hobbies/ interests**

- How do you spend your spare time? (Constructively of course). If you have a part-time job, how do you manage to juggle this with a full-time course?
- How do your hobbies make you special? Have you been involved in the Duke of Edinburgh Awards for example? Are you involved in any community service or do you have special family responsibilities?

#### **Section 6: A concluding statement in support of your application**

- Like your opening statement, your ending should have an impact so store one idea until the end.
- Try to reinforce your passion for studying this topic at university.
- Choose one or two areas which link to your degree course or universities.
- If you are deferring your entry to university, explain why this is and what you intend doing.

#### **General Points to consider when writing your personal statement**

- To enable you to draft and redraft your statement you should construct a “word” document. .
- Check technical accuracy – grammar, spelling, paragraphs etc.
- If English is not your first language ask a native speaker for help.
- Avoid generalisations and expand on bland statements – “In my spare time, I like reading” – this doesn’t tell the Admissions Tutor much – tell them what type of books you like to read and why.
- Don’t feel that you have to use up all the space. If you feel that you have included everything that you want to, then don’t try to pad out the remaining space with irrelevant information.
- Your reference will ultimately be compiled by your tutor but the greatest input will come from the subject teacher of your choice. If, for example, you wish to study Medicine then you will choose an appropriate Science teacher. If it is Law, then you will most probably choose your English or History teacher. Hence, you will be expected to submit your personal statement to the teacher who will be your main referee. **Only after you have submitted a copy of your personal statement to this teacher will your reference be written.**

- Ask your Tutor and your Wellbeing teacher for help. Don't be disheartened if they suggest you make a few changes – it is better to get it right. They have a wealth of experience and you should tap into it.

### **Payment**

You can either do this directly, using a banker's card or through College. The Sixth Form Secretary will advise you about internal payment arrangements.

# Some sample Personal Statements from successful students

## Example 1

My ambition to study Medicine stems from a number of factors, one being that it was the career of my late grandfather, and I would like to emulate his success as Senior Partner in a General Practice. My upbringing, however, was very different to his. My childhood was spent in Argentina, a third world country, making me acutely aware of how fortunate I am. Further experience through extensive traveling, not just in South America, has strengthened my desire to care for others. Some day I would love to incorporate my passion for travel with that of helping the disadvantaged, by becoming a volunteer with an organization such as Médecins Sans Frontiers.

My passion for Medicine is reflected in my higher level subjects and I have chosen to write my Extended Essay in Chemistry, in which I investigate the conditions affecting the yield of Paracetamol. My History coursework examines sources referring to the Great Plague of 1665. In addition, I enjoy reading science based literature such as 'Mean Genes' by Terry Burnham and Jay Phelan.

In order to confirm that Medicine is the right pathway for me I first attended a 'Medlink' course in December xxxx at Nottingham University. I have since undertaken two work experience placements. The first was at the Herts and Essex Hospital, Bishop's Stortford on a geriatric ward, where I learned about patient care. The second was at Barnet General Hospital, London, which enabled me to see the clinical side of a medical career, shadowing doctors in Children's Outpatients and on a Paediatrics ward.

From current experience, I have become particularly interested in Paediatrics. I have become involved in an international project to help

*continued*

An opening section showing passion for subject

A section showing the skills you have learnt from your IB

A section on work experience and enrichment activities and highlight the skills gained

A section on work experience and enrichment activities and highlight the skills gained

Other interests, hobbies or responsibilities outside of College.

improve the quality of life of children at a 'Special School' in Romania to re-decorate and re-furbish classrooms, as well as participating in 'Therapy' sessions for the children with special needs.

As part of the CAS component of the International Baccalaureate I have also had the opportunity to work with children in this country producing a 'Story Sack' for six and seven year olds as well as teaching French to ten year olds. The service element of CAS has been particularly rewarding due to my interest in Interact, of which I am currently President. As a junior version of the Rotary Club, we have been able to raise money for a number of charities such as Cancer Research and SOR, a local organization that supports the homeless. This has involved organizing events including discos, sponsored runs and 'sleeping rough'. I believe I have achieved invaluable experience as a leader and I am a more effective communicator having gained greater insight into the art of teamwork.

Doctors hold a vast amount of responsibility and I am confident that I fit this profile. After being selected as a College Prefect I have subsequently become Head Girl. I also represent the College on the Bishop's Stortford Youth Council, a group that meets monthly to try and make improvements to the town for young people.

For relaxation I enjoy sport and I have been a regular member of the Bishop's Stortford Hockey Club for the past eight years. Traveling remains a very important part of my life as I believe so much can be gained from learning about different cultures.

I now look forward to the challenges of studying Medicine and fulfilling my ambition to practise Medicine.

**Example 2**

I have been fascinated by the study of History and Politics from early in my school career. I enjoy analysing the interrelationships between past and present, evaluating and interpreting the arguments of others on key social and political issues. I remain deeply interested in seeking to understand the values that underpin society and its structures.

An opening section showing passion for subject

Studying History at higher level has given me first-hand experience of thorough research. It has led me to begin an Extended Essay on the personal historical study of the events leading up to and including 'Bloody Sunday', and how the politics before and after the event provoked the violent incident and the subsequent outrage.

Paragraph showing what aspects of the subject you have enjoyed. Mention any books/journals that have been read

The merging of the more personal side of History and Politics; the effect on people's lives is what has interested me most. 'The Origins of the Present Troubles in Northern Ireland' by Caroline Kennedy-Pipe has led me to explore and scrutinize other historical and political arguments, by assessing the way in which she saw the deployment of British troops as the catalyst to exacerbate the situation.

I am also interested in the Cold War period and the interaction between the superpowers, as well as analysing the recent Presidential campaigns. The way the extended fluctuating stalemate of the Post-war era developed two opposing countries into major world leaders intrigues me. But not just in world terms, also the personal relations between the American President and the Soviet Premier and how disputes were solved or diffused.

Positions of responsibility in the school with reference made to transferable skills/ personal qualities eg leadership, communication and organisation

The study of History has taught me to clearly articulate my thoughts and aided my democratic election as Head Boy by both my peers and teachers. This appointment has led to opportunities for me to speak my mind and to express a desire for change to large audiences of parents and students. I am Chair of Sixth Form Council which formulates and proposes issues of improvement in the school. This responsibility has led me to become more mature; I have learnt to plan my time and prioritise whilst developing my interpersonal skills

*continued*

My natural ability to communicate identified me as a candidate to take part in recent pioneering business and peer mentoring schemes. These activities enabled me to be more relaxed and contemplative of my own opinions and to show flexibility when dealing with situations.

Other interests including sport, music and travel with reference to personal qualities

This summer I spent a month in Borneo as part of a Team Challenge programme. The month was split between acclimatisation, project, challenge and rest and relaxation phases. The onus was increasingly on student leadership and it led to an increased maturity in my approach to life and a more reflective and focused outlook. Recently I finished a Community Sports Leader Award during which I further developed my ability to clearly and concisely communicate.

Outside the curriculum I enjoy participating in sport with both the Bishop's Stortford Rugby Club and Ware Athletics clubs. Running in particular is a very important sport to me and Rugby provides a social backing to an enjoyable sport.

Final concluding statement reinforcing your passion for the subject

My passion in History and Politics remains strong. I would relish the opportunity to investigate whether there are any patterns to the political and social changes of today's world; the reason I wish to study a degree in History and Politics.

# Post-application

When you press the 'send' button on your application it goes to the College UCAS Administrator.

The Administrator checks your form and, if errors are identified, your form will be returned to you, together with an e-mail, indicating changes that you need to make. Once the application has been approved your reference will be added and your form will be sent to UCAS.

At this point UCAS will send you an e-mail acknowledging your application and you will be able to track its progress using your personal pin number.

UCAS process your form and send it out to the universities you have chosen. The universities then make a decision about your application. They might make you an offer, or they might reject you. Offers can be conditional (dependent upon you achieving certain grades), or occasionally they can be unconditional. However, this is more likely to be the case if you are applying after you have your results. Some people start to hear back from the universities straight away, whilst others don't hear anything for a while. Don't worry if your friends have had responses from their choices and you haven't, the UCAS system is very efficient – it's just that some universities are a bit slower than others!

Sometimes, prior to making you an offer, the university might want to find out more about you by inviting you to attend an interview.

## **Interviews**

If you are invited to attend an interview or audition, you may also be given a tour of the university and/or a talk about your course. If you carefully prepared questions are covered by the talk, don't worry – just explain this at the interview.

Be prepared for different types of interviews – you may have a panel of interviewers, or just one, or it may be a group interview with other applicants.

### **In the interview, be prepared to:**

- Explain your choice of institution and course.
- Discuss your academic work, or any recent projects you have worked on, work experience, etc. Be prepared to explain why you chose your current course(s).
- Defend what you have written in your personal statement.
- Discuss current events.
- Participate: ask questions (and expect straight answers) – have your questions written down if necessary.
- Talk and listen and put up a good argument. Explain what you can offer to university life.

**At the university, look out for:**

- Happy students
- Enthusiastic staff
- Good facilities

(If you don't see these, ask yourself why?)

**Think of what is going through the minds of Admissions Tutors. How are they assessing you? What criteria are they using?**

- What has this student got to offer to the university?
- Is the student seriously interested in the course?
- Does the student demonstrate qualities to suggest that they will be a successful independent learner?
- Does the student have an enquiring mind? Is this person a thinker or a book learner?
- How does the student respond to challenges?
- Does the student demonstrate an ability to solve problems?
- How well does the student communicate?
- Does the personal statement ring true?
- Will this student prosper here? Is it the right environment?

**They are looking for:**

- Passion, genuine subject interest
- Evidence of research and preparation (e.g. having a list of questions, having read the prospectus, etc.)
- A lively and enthusiastic presence, a good communicator
- Clarity of thought and analytical ability
- Reliability and commitment

**Thinking of these should allow you to prepare for some typical interview questions**

- Why have you applied to Higher Education?
- Why have you applied for this course?
- What can you contribute to this course?
- Do you have any career plans?
- What aspects of your current course do you find the most appealing and why?
- What have you done to support your application other than follow your current curriculum? What have you done outside the classroom to support your application?
- What qualities do you have that would persuade me that you will be a successful independent learner?

**Then there are the subject specific questions**

- (Business) What qualities does a person in business require to be successful?
- (IT) What software have you written?
- (Education) How will your current spare time activities help in a teaching career?
- (Science) In your opinion, what has been the most significant breakthrough in the last 5 years?
- (Visual Arts) What makes a good artist?
- (Law) What contributions do lawyers make to society?
- (PPE) Do you find synergy between Politics, Philosophy and Economics?

REMEMBER! You know that you deserve a place on this course, they are already partly convinced (or they wouldn't have asked to see you), so be clear and confident about what you have to offer, and hopefully you will get the offer you are looking for! However, do not be complacent and do not be overconfident. It is an old adage but ..... practice makes perfect!!! You should know this from all the IB presentations that you have made/will make. At the same time, if you know that you are prone to nerves, you need to prepare strategies to combat your anxieties.

Ask your parents, a friend or a careers adviser to help you go through a trial run.

**Offers**

At the end of the process your choices will most probably have been narrowed down. At this stage UCAS will give you a deadline to decide on your first choice, i.e. your conditional firm offer (CF) and your conditional insurance offer (CI) normally an offer of lower grades in case you don't achieve well enough for your first choice. Remember that you will be committed to these choices if you get the grades, so only put down courses you really want to do!! You will have to turn down any other offers.

**Extra**

If you applied for 5 courses on your UCAS application and didn't manage to secure any offers, or turned down all the ones you received, you have a second chance to apply for a place, using UCAS Extra. This service begins at the end of February and runs until the end of June.

With **UCAS Extra**, you can only apply for one course at a time, using the UCAS Track tool.

If you have declined all of your offers, and add a choice through **UCAS Extra**, you will not be able to accept any of your original choices later.

The UCAS **Track tool** allows you keep up to date with the progress of your application online. If you become eligible for **UCAS Extra**, a button will appear on your Track screen, which you can then use to apply for a course.

**Finding a course**

You can search for courses using the **Course Search tool** on the UCAS website. This will tell you which courses still have vacancies – an 'x' will be displayed next to any course with places still available.

It's worth contacting the university or college before making your application, to make sure you have the right entry requirements and therefore will actually be considered for a place.

You should also check whether there is an Entry Profile for the course, as this might provide some

information on what the institution looks for in its students. This will give an idea of whether you are likely to be offered a place or not.

Once you have decided on the course you would like to apply for, enter the details into the Track system, and UCAS will send your application to the institution.

It's important you research courses thoroughly before applying through Extra – if you did not receive any offers from your original 5 applications, you may want to consider applying for a related subject, or something different altogether.

### **After you've applied through UCAS Extra**

If you are offered a place and accept it, this means you are committed to that institution and you cannot apply anywhere else. Track will give you a date by which you need to reply to the offer.

If you decide to turn the offer down, or the university/college turns you down, you can apply for a different course through UCAS Extra, providing there is still enough time.

You can also apply for another choice if you haven't received a decision from your Extra choice within 3 weeks of applying to them.

If you don't get any offers through UCAS Extra, don't panic! There is always the Clearing process, which gives you another opportunity to apply for courses after you've received your examination results.

### **Results**

Almost all students receive their first/second choices of Higher Education at Hockerill but students might have to use the UCAS Clearing system. The Sixth Form Tutor Team will provide advice and facilities for those who need it. On Results Day you will need to take the following items with you:

- Details of the offers provided by the Universities or Colleges in terms of the grades required.
- Details of names and phone no. of the Admissions Tutor of their chosen institution.
- A copy of their application form and reference
- Clearing sections in newspapers

### **Conclusion**

When you finally get to university, all this work will have been worth it. Most people who have been to Higher Education look back on this time as the best years of their life. As well as getting a qualification, which will improve your employment prospects, you should have the most fantastic time.

# UCAS Timeline

## YEAR 12

Research courses and universities.



Complete Stamford Test and send off for prospectuses.



Seek Connexions interview if required.



Attend UCAS Convention Day and meet Admissions Tutors from different degree courses from around the UK.



Start personal statement.



University Open Days. You will be allowed to take two Open Day visits but no more. Most of these should take place after you have done your Year 12 exams All requests for Open Days should be made via the Principal. Any extra university visits (above two) are to take place during non College time.



Complete all necessary personal details on electronic UCAS Apply form. This is accessible from home as well as College.

## YEAR 13

Final University choices up to five in line with predicted grades. These should match more or less, the entry requirements (grades or UCAS points).



Register for any admissions tests or aptitude tests that they need for specific subjects.



Deadline for all Oxbridge, Medicine and Veterinary applications must be sent before October 15th



Await offers and interview information.



Attend interviews, if called for.



Consider pros and cons of universities and offers made.



Make first choice and reserve choice and inform UCAS. There should be a degree of difference in the two so as to allow for any possible drop in grades at IB.



If you have received all outright rejections, (very unlikely) or you do not like any of those you have been offered and providing you have not accepted any, you may make one further application using UCAS extra.



Receive IB results. Inform UCAS of final university choice and record your next educational destination with administrative staff at College. Clearing will be available for those students who do not have the required grades.

# Glossary

Below is a list of commonly used words and phrases, together with a summary of their meanings.

**Apply:** The online application system for applying for higher education courses.

**Adjustment:** Applicants who have met and exceeded the conditions of their firm choice are given an opportunity to look for an alternative place while holding their original confirmed place. (Post results)

**Clearing:** If you have not met the offer requirements and you have not secured a place at the university of your choice, this system enables you to apply for course vacancies. This only comes into operation after the publication of 'A' Levels.

**Conditional offer:** An offer made by a university or college, whereby you must fulfil certain criteria before you can be accepted on the relevant course.

**Confirmation:** When conditional offers that you have accepted become unconditional or are declined. Confirmation is dependent on your qualification/exam results.

**Deferral:** Holding an offer until the following year.

**Entry Profiles:** Comprehensive information about individual courses and institutions, including statistics and entry requirements.

**Extra:** The opportunity to apply for another course if you have used all five choices and not secured a place. Extra runs from the end of February until the end of June.

**Firm offer:** The offer that you have accepted as your first choice.

**Institution:** A university or college offering higher education courses.

**Insurance offer:** The offer that you have accepted as your second choice, in case you do not meet the requirements for your firm offer.

**Invitation:** An invitation from a university or college to attend for interview, audition, or provide a portfolio, essay, or other piece of work.

**Personal ID:** A 10-digit individual number assigned to you when you register to use Apply. It is printed on communication from UCAS and is displayed in the format 123-456-7890. You will be asked to provide this number if you contact their Customer Service Unit.

**Point of entry:** Your year of entry to the course, for example, 2 refers to the second year of the course.

**Scheme Code:** Used in conjunction with your Personal ID, to uniquely identify your application.

**Track:** A system where you can track the progress of your application online, reply to any offers received, and make certain amendments, for example, change of address or email.

**Unconditional offer:** An offer given to you by a university or college if you have satisfied the criteria and can attend the course.

**Unistats:** a website for students who want to research and compare subjects and universities before deciding where to apply. You can also look at student satisfaction ratings and explore the figures about getting a graduate job after completing a course.

**Unsuccessful:** You have not been accepted by the university or college concerned.

**Withdrawal:** Either you or a university/college cancels a choice before a decision has been made - a reason will be included if the withdrawal was issued by an institution.

**Yougo:** Yougo is a student-only networking site, where you can meet people doing your course or going to your university or college before you start. You can also access university and college profile pages and contact UCAS advisers online.

# Useful websites to help you with your research

GSCC (Social Work) [www.gsc.org.uk](http://www.gsc.org.uk) for education & training in Social Work. For Degree programmes use the UCAS site (See a Careers Adviser for details)

DFES –Finance [www.dfes.gov.uk/student](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/student) support

Student Loans company – Information on student loans and repayments, contacts and FAQ's [www.sl.co.uk](http://www.sl.co.uk)

Student MoneyNet – Information on finance. Accommodation and lifestyle – plus more. [www.studentmoneynet.co.uk](http://www.studentmoneynet.co.uk)

UK Course Finder – Help with choosing HE course. Includes an online questionnaire. [www.ukcoursefinder.com](http://www.ukcoursefinder.com)

PUSH – Independent Guide to finding the right University [www.push.co.uk](http://www.push.co.uk)

Intute – Web based research resources [www.intute.ac.uk](http://www.intute.ac.uk)

Lattitude– volunteering experiences for your year out [www.lattitude.org.uk/](http://www.lattitude.org.uk/)

Worldwide Volunteering – gap year opportunities [www.worldwidevolunteering.org.uk](http://www.worldwidevolunteering.org.uk)

Year in Industry – Opportunities for Gap years in Industry [www.yini.org.uk](http://www.yini.org.uk)

Uni. Serve UK – Your student life – BY Students FOR Students. Chat rooms on different topics of interest e.g. money management, accommodation, living in shared houses, gap year advice etc. Mainly orientated to those already at University but still useful for applicants [www.uniserveuk.com](http://www.uniserveuk.com)

StudentUK – A site for students with sections on housing shopping, advice (inc. gap year, disabilities, careers, overseas) fun and health. [www.studentuk.com](http://www.studentuk.com)

StudyUK – Designed for international students looking for study opportunities in the UK [www.studyuk.hobsons.co.uk](http://www.studyuk.hobsons.co.uk)

Unofficial Guides – A site with the students' views on over 100 UK universities with links to other student related sites, a directory of UK universities, student union websites and general advice to prospective students. [www.unofficial-guides.com](http://www.unofficial-guides.com)

[www.hotcourses.com](http://www.hotcourses.com) – Lists courses available to study.

[www.opendays.com](http://www.opendays.com) – Dates/details and contacts for University Open Days.

The Complete University Guide. An excellent site with league table compilations and University Profiles [www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk](http://www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk)



### **Insider's Guide to Applying to University**

Full of honest insights, this book takes you all the way through the university application process, providing all the information you will need to gain your place at university. It guides you through the trickiest bits of the UCAS application, and reveals top tips on creating a personal statement. The book also includes vital information such as tips and advice from careers advisers and current students, guidance on making sense of all the university information and choosing a course, tips for a successful interview, information on admissions tests and advice on using UCAS Extra and the Clearing process.



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